

Interview with John Borling
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Interviewer: Mark DePue

Borling: I got real sick in '71 and lost a lot of weight. I mean, I was on my way out, frankly.

DePue: Do you know what it was?

Borling: It was amoebic, that's my word, amoebic dysentery and unable to hold any food or water down and just lost weight. You were already thin but went way, way down. I was very weak and just able to lay there puking and crapping my guts out, and I'm in a big room at this time. I'm with a group of forty guys, but just I really went downhill in a hurry. It was just at the start of some guys started to get packages.

Again, this was as things started to improve, in the '71, '72 timeframe, but I don't remember if it was '71. It's got to be '71.

DePue: Packages from home or the Red Cross?

Borling: Packages from home, heavily pilfered, and not everybody, just a smattering. I can remember this sickness occurred and in the middle of this sickness, the most amazing thing happened. It was amazing, that one morning the doors opened up and they walked in and they had little quarter loaves, not quarter, little tranches of French bread, and we hadn't seen bread in five years, and hot, sweet milk. I mean, like the French would make a steamer, you know, except it wasn't a steamer, per se, but it was pretty close to it. They ladled out bread and hot sweet milk, in your cup. They gave you a cup of hot, sweet milk and a hunk of bread, and this is breakfast, you know we never got breakfast. Geez, the war's over, you talk about, we're going home tomorrow. (laughs) Still had a couple of years to go. But this is out of that treatment hockey stick there, toward the end. I can remember, I was very sick and the guys brought it to me. I couldn't even get off the damn pallet thing.

Now, I haven't remembered this in years. I can remember, I can taste the bread and that milk. This is forty-one years later and I can taste that bread and milk, and what's more, we thought a one-time shot,

whatever it is. Some guys saved the bread and it was funny, we were like little subhuman people. They came the next morning, the same thing, and I still wasn't able to keep it down. I was still—in fact, it probably accelerated my condition, notwithstanding how good it tasted. But somebody had gotten a package and I want to say—this might not even be the right word, but the word that comes to mind is tetracycline. There was tetracycline in the package and whoever got it, and they gave it to me, and they also, as I remember now, the bread and the milk ration got stretched out and there wasn't as much, and some of the guys gave me their bread and milk, to try to nurse me back to health, and to tell you the truth, I couldn't even tell you who it was today, but they did. The combination of that medicine and more than my share of the bread and milk, because they did it spread out. It would go up and down as to the amount, brought me back.